



Legislator Education Survey 2010

Response for: downing@cox.net

Completed: 7/26/2010 - 2:16 PM EDT

- 1 In an effort to balance our state budget, legislators have recently reduced Arizona's K-12 and university/community school budgets by more than \$2 billion during the past two years. During this next session, legislators still need to address the structural budget deficit that remains. Which of the following best describes your approach to balancing the budget?

Answer

Enact further cuts to K-12 and higher education funding as they make up a large share of the overall budget.

Stabilize funding to education at existing levels until our economy recovers.

Find ways to recover the \$2.2 billion that was cut. Examine how state revenues are spent and whether the state collects enough revenue to meet its needs.

Comment: The underlying problem of educational funding is the extreme partisanship and a dysfunctional Legislative decision-making process. As former ranking D on the House Education and Higher Education committees, I know.

To a deep structural reform so that education funding is not wrapped up in the R vs D gridlock. I am running for deep reform, as a nonpartisan candidate and supporting a Constitutional amendment for a nonpartisan legislature, elected in nonpartisan elections.

- 2 Do you support efforts to readdress Arizona's tax structure to alleviate the reliance on a fluctuating sales tax?

Answer

Yes

No

Comment: In 2003 and every year after that, I introduced a tax reform bill for the TPT ("sales tax"). My bill morphed into the "broaden the base" revenue reform of the Democratic caucus. The bill included LOWERING the sales tax rate to stimulate the economy. I would tweak that early work, diversifying our revenue structure to be less sensitive to economic cycles. That means adjusting the mix of property, sales, corporate, and income taxes, and business credit targeting.

- 3 Arizona's current budget was devised using a series of cuts, borrowing, financial deferrals and the voter-approved temporary sales tax increase. Which of the following fiscal measures would you consider supporting this year? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An effort to close existing tax loopholes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase personal income tax
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enact a flat tax on corporate/individual income
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase property tax
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eliminate tax credits (please specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expand the sales tax to services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> End tax exempt status for mining, etc.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Simplify the state tax code
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporate tax cuts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensure corporate tax parity (large companies to pay same share as small businesses; tax exemption via out-of-state holding companies prohibited, etc.)
I think the only effective budget solution would be to introduce further tax cuts.
I think our current tax structure is adequate and we just need to wait until the economy rebounds.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: see below

Comment: Although I checked most, not because I will use them, but I want them in the tool kit and not ruled out of the toolkit. At this point, we have about ran out of budget gimmicks. All options on on the table - both tax increase, tax cuts, credit increases and credit retirements. To work out a reliable revenue stream, you can't begin by leaving anything out. Again, individual candidates and legislators opinions matter less in the current system that needs reform.

4 A number of national surveys rank Arizona among the last in K-12 per-pupil funding. Arizona invests \$61 less per student than it did more than 20 years ago, according to the American Legislative Exchange Council. What do you think of this level of investment?

Answer
Arizona spends too much on K-12 education. We need to enact further cuts.
This is an adequate level of investment. I do not think we need to invest more in K-12 funding.
Although I do not think this funding is adequate, I do not think we can increase funding for K-12 education at this time.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is embarrassing to be among the last in the nation in K-12 education funding. As a legislator, I will work this fiscal year (2010-2011) to increase funding for K-12 public schools.

Comment: Question 4 is related to question 3. To increase funding we need revenue. Jump starting the economy is vital to increased revenues. As a teacher for 39 years, albeit in higher education, I am deeply concerned. But "concern" or "valuing" - overworked words these days - does not make revenue increase. We have a mess and we need to reorganize how decisions are made so we can make better decisions. That will take a Constitutional amendment...but governance, like education, is a long term process.

5 Each year, more than \$60 million in Arizona taxpayer dollars are directed to School Tuition Organizations (STOs) for private school tuition through the tax credit program. What do you think about the current private school tax credit program? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
More tax dollars should be allocated to expand the private school tuition program.
The private school tuition program should be maintained as-is.
The amount of tax dollars allocated to the private school tuition tax credit program should be reduced.

The private school tax credit program should be repealed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The 10% processing fee that STOs are allowed to keep from donations for expenses should be reduced to a lower percentage. (Processing fees in Florida are capped at 3%.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> There should be income limits on the families who benefit from the private school tax credit program. The original intent of the program was to provide access to private schools for poor children.
I think any Arizona family should be able to take advantage of the tax-funded tuition benefits.
I don't believe we should be using tax dollars for private school tuition assistance.

Comment: The option that I have is not on your list.

I am not pleased with the way the STO program has developed, particularly the processing fee. I will subject it to a full review. Substantive reforms must be made if this program is to have my support.

6 Do you believe reform is needed in our public education system? If so, which reforms do you support? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
No, reform is not needed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, reform is needed.
Yes, reform is needed but we need to establish adequate funding first.
I support the participation in a national standards program, i.e. NAEP.
I support increased charter school funding.
I support more teacher accountability.
I support the Common Core Standards created by the National Governors' Association and the state superintendents of education.
I support linking teacher pay to student test scores.
I support moving quickly to shut down failing schools.
I support creating more charter schools.
I support restructuring the "equalized funding" formula

Comment: "Reform" means everything and nothing to everyone and no one. Some reforms require resources. Others do not. I support accountability of all components of the educational system and linking pay to performance - provided the incremental improvement is objectively measurable for a student or group of students. Teachers with more challenging students should not be penalized, but rewarded for incremental progress. I have no problem funding good charter schools.

7 Some argue that we should move away from traditional public schools and transition to a system with more students attending state funded, privately-run charter schools and private schools with the aid of tax credits and/or vouchers. Do you support this plan?

Answer
Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Comment: Let's improve the dialogue, not divide the world into private/public. Let's look more closely at the diversity of students, teachers, parents and regions of the State. The premise that all public schools are different from all private schools is wrong. Well paid, responsive, accountable teachers is what counts. I lived in 25 places/5 states before I was 13, attending public schools and was nearly illiterate. A good teacher who cared taught me to read. I went onto get a PhD from Stanford.

8 **This year, legislators referred to voters a ballot measure to repeal First Things First, an early childhood education program with a dedicated funding source approved by voters in 2006. What do you support?**

Answer
First Things First funding should be repealed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First Things First funding should be maintained in accordance with the original voter mandate.
Comment: If it is maintained, we get back to the revenue problems in the earlier questions.

9 **Arizona currently has some of the largest K-12 classroom sizes in the nation. Please check the statements you agree with below. (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer
Classroom size isn't a crucial factor for student success--many other factors are much more important and we should focus our priorities elsewhere.
I think it would be more efficient if we increased classroom size along with teacher pay. This would attract better teachers and decrease the cost of running the school.
I think classroom size is an important factor for student success, but I don't think we can currently afford to increase funding to pay for the additional teachers and/or school facilities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classroom size is one of the most important factors for student success--we should be working to reduce class size as one of our top priorities.
If parents believe that classroom size is important for their child, they should consider enrolling their children in a private school with a classroom enrollment cap.

Comment: Been there, done that. Education is labor intensive. I am a more effective teacher in a smaller classroom. I tried to teach some K-12 classes and, compared to the University, this is exhausting work, most notably in large classrooms. A ratio of 1:20 is a good target, downwardly adjusted for special needs situations, of course.

10 **Arizona has one of the highest high school drop-out rates in the country. In the last budget, all state aid for adult GED (General Education Diploma) funding was eliminated. Please check the statement you agree with below.**

Answer
GEDs should be funded by individuals.
The state should provide funding for GED programs.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I will work to restore funding for adult GED services.

Comment: Throughout my two previous terms in office, I have steadfastly worked for adult GED funding. I am particularly concerned about Arizona Department of Correction GED work - which has positive, societal impacts.

11 **The Arizona Constitution has many sections impacting the state budget and education. If elected, which of the following articles do you most identify with? (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall provide by law for an annual tax sufficient, with other sources of revenue, to defray the necessary ordinary expenses of the state for each fiscal year. (Article IX, Section 3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No tax shall be laid or appropriation of public money made in aid of any church, or private or sectarian school, or any public service corporation. (Article IX, Section 10)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The university and all other state educational institutions shall be open to students of both sexes, and the instruction shall be nearly as free as possible. (Article XI, Section 6: paragraph one)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall make appropriations, to be met by taxation, as shall insure the proper maintenance of all state educational institutions & shall make such special appropriations as shall provide for their development & improvement. (Article XI, Sec10)

12

If you have children, what type of school(s) did they/do they attend? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional Public School
<input type="checkbox"/> Charter School
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private School
<input type="checkbox"/> Home School
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> University/Community College/Higher Education
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A I have no children.

Comment: I am the only candidate in the LD28 Senate race who has raised children in the district.